

### **STEP THREE: INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF NELB STUDENTS FOR CLASSIFICATION AND PLACEMENT**

The best way to ensure that all students are identified and assessed in a consistent and appropriate manner is for the district to have a *comprehensive assessment plan* in place (Parker, 1993). A plan spells out the procedures, strategies, tests and criteria the district will use for proficiency assessment and instructional placement. See Appendix G, p. 106 for an outline to use in developing a district assessment plan.

Once the ESL Coordination Team has completed identification and screening activities for a NELB student, the next step is to conduct an *initial assessment*. NELB students must be assessed for classification and placement purposes, if there is no *objective proof* that they have the English language skills required to do grade-level work.

#### **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR INITIAL ASSESSMENT**

These guidelines are an overview of options for consistent and accurate assessment procedures, strategies and tests. A district might use them in developing their own effective initial assessment services. Following these general guidelines are more specific guidelines for each area of assessment: English language proficiency, primary/home language skills, and academic knowledge & skills. At the end of the chapter is a resource list for assessment reference and test materials, many of which are available on loan through the LCAP.

#### **Procedures**

The initial assessment process for proficiency classification and placement may take several weeks to complete and should begin as soon as the NELB student has been referred by the team.

If parents of a NELB student were not informed at the time of registration or screening of the initial assessment, as well as its purpose, this should be done prior to testing. At a later time, test results and placement options for their child should be discussed with them.

The team forwards all the information gathered through Steps One and Two: Identification and Screening to the person(s) conducting the assessment activities. This information about the student's previous education, language(s), culture and experiential background should be recorded on the *Screening Form*, Appendix F, p. 84.

The evaluator(s) reviews the screening form and accompanying documents in order to plan the appropriate assessment activities based on the student's unique background. Planning, administering and interpreting the assessment requires that an evaluator consider the following student variables:

- ◆ cultural, family and experiential background;
- ◆ previous exposure to English;
- ◆ age/grade level, as well as maturity of the student;
- ◆ previous schooling experiences in the primary/home language;
- ◆ previous schooling in the U.S. or abroad and types of language and academic support services received during this time;
- ◆ record of academic problems experienced in the regular instructional program.

### **Documenting Assessment Results**

The results of all formal and informal assessments of English language proficiency, native language proficiency and academic skills & knowledge should be recorded on an *Initial Assessment Record Form*. See Appendix G, p. 110 for a sample.

The Initial Assessment Record Form and supporting documents are shared with everyone involved in decision-making about the student's instructional placement and used to make recommendations for instructional placement and adjunct services.

At a follow-up meeting to discuss the instructional placement, the form is shared with appropriate school personnel and the parents and then stored in the student's cumulative folder.

### **Strategies/Tests**

Decisions about strategies and tests to be used in identification and placement of ESL students are made at the local level. Selecting strategies and tests that meet information requirements, student characteristics, and administrative concerns requires considerable thought, organization and planning. The ESL Coordination Team needs to consider the existing research and theories about language proficiency and academic achievement, as well as the purpose of the assessment, specific skills to be assessed, and best approaches.

In its 1992 publication, *"Summary of Recommendations and Policy Implications for Improving the Assessment and Monitoring of Students with Limited English Proficiency"*, the *Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)* makes the following general recommendations concerning the selection of assessment instruments for purposes of classification, placement and exiting of students from language support programs. "Educators should:

- select assessment instruments based on sound psychometric practice and theoretically based research, including contemporary theories and research on language proficiency and communicative competence;
- select language proficiency tests and assessments in both English and the native language according to the following criteria:

Collectively, tests should cover all communicative competencies, i.e., receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills.

Tests should represent the age, grade and attention development of the student and reflect increasing complexity of language skills as maturation and language development continue;

Assessments should measure the functional competence (what the children can do) in relation to the full range of demands of the classroom and the academic language needed to succeed.

When more than one test or assessment instrument is used, tests should be equated to ensure comparability and complementarity. In addition, a norming study may be necessary to ensure comparability."

## **AREAS OF ASSESSMENT**

### **I. Initial Assessment of English Language Proficiency -**

To establish students' English language *proficiency classification* (NEP, LEP, TEP, or FEP)<sup>8</sup> and *instructional level* (entry-level, beginner, intermediate, advanced, transitional) in listening, speaking, reading and writing for social and academic purposes in order to determine:

- ◆ whether students have a level of *English language proficiency*<sup>9</sup> which enables them to do grade-level work;
- ◆ whether the student needs an alternative language program and/or adjunct support services to develop social and academic language skills;
- ◆ the student's current English language skills and instructional needs and an appropriate level of ESL instructional placement.

### **Recommended Options**

### **II. Initial Assessment of Primary/Home Language Skills -**

To determine students' language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) skills in the primary/home language for social and academic purposes, to the extent possible.

### **III. Initial Assessment of Academic Knowledge & Skills -**

To evaluate, to the extent possible, what grade-level skills and knowledge students have in academic areas for the purpose of instructional placement in the regular instructional program and/or for adjunct academic support services (e.g., tutoring, Chapter 1, etc.).

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<sup>8</sup>NEP = Non English Proficiency, LEP = Limited English, TEP = Transitional English Proficiency, FEP = Fluent English Proficiency

<sup>9</sup>"Proficiency" here refers to the ability to understand, speak, read, write and learn in English for the purposes of both interpersonal communication and academic study in a classroom setting. Proficiency in the academic language is the ability to understand more decontextualized and cognitively demanding language as students advance in grade level (Cummins, 1984).

## **I. INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

### **A. Procedures**

The following procedures for assessment of English language proficiency are intended as broad guidelines. Ultimately, evaluators need to use their own discretion about the best way to assess each individual student's language skills.

#### ***1. Newly Enrolled NELB Students***

If the screening of a NELB student indicates that, beyond any shadow of a doubt, s/he has had absolutely no previous exposure to the English language or knowledge of the language through study, it is not recommended that the student go through a formal assessment of English language proficiency. Such a student should be identified as having non-English Proficiency (NEP) and placed at a Beginner Level of ESL instruction. The student could be tested after she has received a sufficient period of instruction in the language.

For students with some previous exposure or instruction in English, no matter how limited, it is recommended that the school arrange to assess the student. It is important to recognize and validate whatever English skills the student has acquired. If the evaluator senses that the student is very anxious or unable to express herself, the assessment should be postponed until later and the student placed at the Beginner Level.

Young children in Grades K - 1 should be assessed for oral (listening and speaking) skills, ideally using a reliable and valid English language proficiency test in conjunction with informal assessments. Using both approaches provides a more holistic picture of the student's language proficiency. Preliteracy and emerging reading/writing skills can also be assessed at these grade levels, if it seems appropriate to the situation.

Students in Grades 2-12 should be formally assessed with a reliable and valid English language proficiency test that assesses all language skill areas--listening, speaking, reading and writing--in conjunction with informal assessments. If the student has no English proficiency (NEP) and there is evidence that the student has never been exposed to reading and writing in English, an assessment of reading/writing skills will be pointless. In the case of older students who lack oral skills but have had previous study of English in their home country, the reading/writing test might still make sense. At any rate, there is no reason to continue with a reading/writing portion of an ESL proficiency test if the student finds it too difficult.

It is important to be sensitive to students whose screening background information shows minimal or interrupted schooling. Lack of experience with formal structured testing situations will surely affect results. Informally assessing the student's natural language may prove more effective. Informal assessment methods often provide the best profile of the students comprehension, speaking and reading/writing skills especially if the findings are used to build upon a student's cultural background, prior knowledge and interests.

## **2. Previously Enrolled NELB Students**

Unless there is *objective proof* of fluent English proficiency and successful grade-level work, every NELB student should be assessed. This includes those who have been in the school system but never had ESL services or recently moved in from another district. Informal observations by school personnel that NELB students are "fluent" cannot be considered objective proof.

Districts should require that students, who score as having fluent English proficiency (FEP) on a comprehensive ESL proficiency test, also meet other criteria for a high level of English proficiency. The reason is that ESL proficiency tests do not necessarily measure whether students have the level of listening comprehension, oral fluency and reading/writing skills necessary to do grade-level work.

Depending on the district's general assessment practices, the English language proficiency of fluent English proficient students should be further assessed with either standardized achievement tests or informal assessments for reading and language arts. Prior to making a determination of fluent English proficiency, districts should show that students are within the range of average to above-average performance according to their district's measures of language proficiency.

### **B. Strategies/Tests**

In the field of ESL, as in education in general, there are different perspectives on what assessment approaches are most useful. There is a lot of concern about the misuse of standardized tests. Along with the school restructuring movement has come a growing interest in informal assessments (also referred to as authentic assessment) which are done for the purpose of improving teaching and learning.

The LCAP recommends that districts use a combination of formal and informal methods of assessment. Multiple measures provide the best assurance that all aspects of students' language proficiency and content knowledge will be assessed and that students capacities, strengths and needs will be identified. Ultimately, it is up to educators to examine their underlying assumptions about second language acquisition and decide whether their district will use or adapt existing strategies and instruments, or develop new ones based on their own district's educational philosophy and curriculum.

## **1. English Language Proficiency Tests**

One of the options for districts in assessing NELB students for initial classification and placement is to use a formal ESL proficiency test. Generally, this means a standardized, norm-referenced test that is available commercially. Some non-commercial ESL tests are also available.

ESL proficiency tests are intended to measure overall language proficiency and mastery of the structure of the language. These tests usually focus on discrete points of language--e.g., syntax, grammar, phonetics, vocabulary--and use an objective approach. Currently, there are ESL tests available which measure general English proficiency in all language skill areas--listening, speaking, reading and writing. These instruments consist of tests for different groupings of grade levels, e.g. K-1, 2-3, 4-6, 7-12.

For districts that do not have established ESL programs and ESL curriculum objectives, an ESL proficiency test can be a practical and fairly reliable way to identify students in need of ESL services. It helps the district to make an **initial classification of language proficiency**.<sup>10</sup>

When combined with informal assessments methods that assess the student's ability to use language in real-life social and academic situations, these tests are helpful in determining a level at which to begin ESL instruction.

A few words of caution about the use of ESL proficiency tests, however. The results of these tests should not be over-interpreted. The tests elicit language in a contrived situation.

While they provide baseline data about oral/aural, reading and writing skills, they are not designed to test language learning aptitude, cognitive ability, or academic skills. Language proficiency tests may also contain some cultural bias, i.e., items and material that the student has never encountered before.

Districts with their own ESL curriculum and performance outcomes may prefer to develop their own formal ESL test or informal assessment procedures. Curriculum-based assessment tests what the student is being taught whereas standardized testing may not. For example, if students are taught about the life cycle of the earthworm, testing them on the social structure of bee colonies would not tell us what they learned.

Traditional ESL tests might measure some of the social and academic language skills needed for success in the regular instructional program, but should not be used as the sole criterion to determine fluent English proficiency or academic readiness. Some students may actually score as "fluent English proficient" on an ESL proficiency test, yet still lack the academic language and content skills necessary to do grade-level work. There are other aspects of student's language proficiency and academic skills that need to be considered. Most ESL practitioners feel that tests should be used in conjunction with other informal measures of language proficiency and sources of information about the student.

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<sup>10</sup>The chart in Chapter Eight, p. 135 can be used as a reference for determining students' levels of language proficiency and ESL instructional placements.

Again, a formal English proficiency test is only one criterion for language proficiency and placement. Districts are strongly encouraged to use multiple assessments and criteria for placement and programming.

For a listing of ESL proficiency tests available on loan from the LCAP, see Appendix G, p. 114.

## **2. Informal Assessment**

Using informal methods of assessment to determine initial classification and instructional placement for ESL students is another option for districts to explore. Certainly this is a direction that many Vermont schools are already moving in terms of assessing the language and academic skills of the general population (e.g., portfolio assessment). There is a broad-based effort of educators, parents, business people and citizens to define content and performance standards for what the public believes all students need to know and be able to do at various grade levels.

Although Vermont does not yet have content or performance standards for English as a Second Language, there are plenty of resources and materials that districts could use to develop their own informal performance-based assessments locally. Combining informal and formal proficiency assessments provides the most complete profile of a student's language skills.

In the NCBE Program Information Guide No. Nine, *Performance and Portfolio Assessment for Language Minority Students* (1992), Valdez Pierce and O'Malley define "alternative [informal] assessment" as follows:

"any method of finding out what a student knows or can do that is intended to show growth and inform instruction and is not a standardized or traditional test; is by definition criterion-referenced; is authentic because it is based on activities that represent actual progress toward instructional goals and reflect tasks typical of classrooms and real-life situations; requires integration of language skills; and may include teacher observation, performance assessment, and student self-assessment."

Although informal assessments may seem best suited to monitoring progress of English language development over time in a classroom setting, there are informal methods that can also be used for the purpose of *initial identification and placement of students*.



Examples of some informal assessments that can be adapted for testing of NELB students include:

<i>Performance Assessments</i>
<i>Oral Language Assessments</i> --oral interviews, story retelling, teacher observation checklists, picture cues, oral language samples, rating scales.
<i>Reading Assessment</i> --cloze tests, checklists of reading behaviors, story retellings, Clay's Observation Survey: running records, concepts of print, and letter identification.
<i>Writing Assessment</i> --writing samples, dictations, Clay's Observation Survey: hearing sounds in words (dictations), writing vocabulary.

For sources of in-depth information about informal assessments, see Appendix G, p. 116. These assessments can provide a more holistic perspective of the student's ability to use English for social and academic purposes and may also be designed to tie in with the district curriculum. Districts with sizable numbers of ESL students may want to develop criteria for proficiency classifications and instructional levels based on their own ESL and content curriculum at the appropriate grade levels.

Designing informal assessment procedures will require more time and effort by the school staff, but may prove more satisfactory in the long run. In order for such an approach to provide reliable and valid information about the student's language proficiency, it is important that those implementing the assessment procedures reach consensus on strategies, student performance outcomes and scoring criteria for a range of grade levels.

Those developing informal assessment procedure and tests will also need to be conscious of what is culturally relevant. For example, if giving a newly arrived Vietnamese child a test using picture cues, you wouldn't show him a picture of someone on snowshoes tapping maple trees in the woods of Vermont and expect a response!

### **C. Assessment Personnel**

A person knowledgeable about planning, administering and interpreting English language proficiency assessments should either evaluate the student or coordinate the assessment, if a team approach is used. Knowledge of linguistics, stages of second language acquisition, cultural issues and non-biased assessment, as well as training and experience in using formal English language proficiency instruments and informal assessments, are invaluable.

Districts with ESL staff members should request their assistance in planning, evaluating and interpreting assessments for initial English language classification and placement activities.

Districts without ESL qualified staff will need to seek a trained, qualified ESL evaluator who can conduct the ESL proficiency assessment. Staff without experience in assessment of ESL students, who serve on an assessment team, should receive in-service training in order to administer or interpret assessments.

## **II. INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF PRIMARY/HOME LANGUAGE SKILLS**

Many students with limited English skills come to school with rich language backgrounds. When schools make an effort to learn about their students' life experiences and oral and literacy skills in their primary/home languages, they are able to build on already existing language skills. A student's previous knowledge and skills should never be overlooked.

### **A. Procedures**

Whenever possible, NELB students referred for an initial assessment should also be tested in their primary/home language. The combination of a thorough identification and screening process and a native language proficiency assessment should provide a good profile of the student's primary/home language skills.

#### ***1. Newly Enrolled NELB Students***

For students who have no previous exposure to English or ESL instruction, the initial assessment should *begin* with an assessment of the student's primary/home language skills, whenever possible.

Procedures recommended for assessment of language skills--listening, speaking, reading, and writing--in the primary/home language would follow similar guidelines with regard to grade level, previous schooling, history of academic difficulties, etc. as those mentioned for assessment of English language skills.

In the case of ESL students who never or only infrequently attended school in their native country, either due to age or circumstance, assessment of primary/home language may have to be limited to oral skills. [The same would apply for NELB students born in the U.S. who have never been taught to read or write in their primary/home language.]

Another important reason to assess native language skills is that it establishes useful baseline data about the student. If a school does not do a native language assessment now, it may not be possible later due to language loss. Evaluation of a student's native language proficiency should be done early, before any decline caused by lack of use. This is critical in resolving issues years later, when educators become concerned that a student may have a learning disability or language disorder. An initial native language assessment can provide crucial information for distinguishing between second language acquisition difficulties and intrinsic language disorders.

Even an informal assessment of primary/home language skills might alert educators to language or literacy gaps which could be addressed by providing an opportunity for native language support.

## ***2. Procedures: Previously Enrolled Students***

Previously enrolled students should also be assessed in the primary/home language if possible. This is especially important if they have been referred for an assessment due to underachievement. A student with varying levels of bilingualism has skills and knowledge in both languages. A preliminary assessment of primary/home language skills will help to determine if bilingual assessment of academic skills can be done. To really assess what bilingual students know, a comprehensive assessment is necessary.

### **B. Strategies/Tests**

#### ***1. Primary/Home Language Tests***

The availability of standardized and commercially developed language proficiency tests in non-English languages is very limited. More tests are available for Spanish speakers than any for other non-English languages. Finding a comprehensive test that measures skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing at the appropriate grade level can be challenging.

It is necessary to proceed with caution when using native language proficiency tests. Sometimes tests have been normed overseas or on a population that speaks a different dialect of the language and the results may not be valid for students outside that group. Test items may include expressions or vocabulary that are not used in the student's own cultural group. There are regional and local dialects of many of the world's languages.

Nonetheless, an evaluator who knows the student's language and cultural group can be sensitive to these issues. Tests that have not been normed for the student's particular linguistic group, if used with caution, can still provide helpful *diagnostic information* about the student's native language skills.

For native language proficiency tests or source information available through the LCAP, see Assessment Resource List, Appendix G, p. 115.

#### ***2. Informal Assessment***

Due to limited availability of primary/home language proficiency instruments, informal assessment methods may be the only viable option for assessing the skills of students from the majority of language groups represented in Vermont.

Many of the same methods listed in the previous discussion of English language proficiency informal assessment strategies can be adapted for assessing primary/home language skills. For example, a rating scale or matrix can be modified for use in assessing oral language or writing samples in non-English languages. The Boston cloze test has been translated into several different languages. Of course, all of this presumes the district is able to find a bilingual evaluator willing to learn how to administer, score and help with interpretation of these assessments.

In the absence of adequate testing instruments or bilingual evaluators, districts are still encouraged to rely as much possible on parents or interpreter/translators to help infer students' levels of reading and writing proficiency in the primary/home language from previous school records, the initial interview, or other information in the student's educational history.

Resources for Assessment, Appendix G, p. 117 gives names of books which could be helpful to those conducting informal assessments of the native languages for Spanish-speaking and Asian students.

### **C. Assessment Personnel**

Finding experienced bilingual evaluators with the same native language and cultural background as your student will be difficult for most language groups in Vermont. While it may not always be possible to find a qualified bilingual evaluator, there are well-educated and linguistically diverse persons who can act as interpreters/translators in conducting informal assessments. Several excellent guides have been written for how to work effectively with interpreters/translators.

Call the LCAP for assistance if you are having trouble locating a native speaker of a language or would like to know more about available instruments or informal approaches.

### **III. INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PLACEMENT**

Assessing the academic skills of NELB students with limited proficiency in English is the most challenging aspect of the initial assessment. There are no simple tests to administer that will quickly tell you what prior content knowledge and skills students have in all the various subject areas.

Despite the difficulty of assessing academic skills, every effort should be made to determine as much as possible about the student's schooling experiences, prior knowledge, personal and academic interests. An understanding of the student's linguistic and academic skills is essential for planning an educational program.<sup>11</sup> It is important to recognize and build upon all students' unique talents, skills and interests.

#### **A. Procedures**

##### **1. Newly Enrolled NELB Students**

For students who are newly arrived in the country and have limited proficiency in *English*, formally assessing academic skills *in English* for placement may be impossible due to the language barrier.

However, learning about the broader context of the student's home, experiential, cultural and previous educational background can provide many informed clues to the student's academic skills. Until teachers have a chance to do some classroom-based assessment, they will need to rely primarily on interviews with their students and parents to learn about the educational backgrounds of their students. The initial screening process, including a review of available school records and a formal interview, should yield much valuable information.

If school records are not available and the formal interview did not provide sufficient information about the student's educational background, other creative approaches for gathering it may be required. For example, the evaluator(s) may try to locate a cultural informant, possibly an international student at a college or university who speaks the student's language, to interview the student or family about the educational background. Evaluators' might also use informal observation checklists to assess prior knowledge and skills in academic areas.

For newly enrolled students whose educational background or native language proficiency assessment indicate sufficient literacy and academic skills in the primary/home language, it may be possible to administer a test of basic skills in mathematics and reading in their native language with a trained bilingual evaluator. If test materials or a trained bilingual evaluator are not available for the particular language, which is often the case, the teacher could work with a bilingual interpreter/translator to do informal assessment of basic academic skills.

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<sup>11</sup>Students with limited schooling may have acquired valuable skills through life experience, as well.

## **2. Previously enrolled NELB students**

For students with previous schooling in English in the U.S. or abroad, there are more possibilities for assessing academic skills. Step Five, monitoring of student progress, p., discusses monitoring the English language development and academic development of ESL students who have been enrolled in an ESL program and content classes. The information about procedures, strategies and tests for monitoring and determining when to exit students from ESL services is also applicable to assessment of previously enrolled NELB students. Please refer to that chapter concerning recommended performance standards and criteria. These should help in conducting a more thorough assessment of previously enrolled students to find out whether they have grade-level academic language skills and content knowledge.

Ideally, bilingual students should be assessed in both their languages in order to get a total picture of their content knowledge and skills. They may have received previous instruction in a subject area in their primary language (or possibly a third language) and be able to express their knowledge of it most articulately in that language. Anyone who has experience learning a second or foreign language knows that lack of specific vocabulary, fluency and grammatical control makes it very difficult to express ideas regardless of what you know about a subject. Therefore, assessment should be conducted in a language that provides the fairest profile of students' skills and abilities.

In addition, evaluators need to be sensitive to whether a child has *ever* been taught the subject matter being tested *in any language*. If not, the student's level of content knowledge and skills may reflect a lack of educational opportunity and not necessarily academic ability. Care must be taken to avoid confusing educational deprivation with an intrinsic learning problem.

Students who were born in the U.S. and entered school speaking a non-English language but never received formal instruction in this language, cannot be assumed to have literacy or academic skills in the primary/home language. Further information should be gathered through parent or student interviews to determine whether testing for academic skills and knowledge in the primary/home language is appropriate.

Students who have been in U.S. schools for awhile and are referred for assessment of academic skills after experiencing problems in the regular instructional program should be evaluated according to the same standards and criteria that would apply if the school were deciding whether to exit them from ESL services (Chapter Nine, p. 177). Attention should be focused on whether the student has had sufficient time and instructional opportunity to acquire academic language skills and concepts. If the student previously received sufficient and appropriate ESL instruction and academic support but is still achieving poorly, referral to an ACT 230 team or special education for more extensive testing may be necessary.

Students who score as fluent English proficient on an ESL proficiency test should also be assessed for academic skills and knowledge, unless there is satisfactory evidence that the student is doing grade-level work successfully. Depending on district policy, formal or informal methods of assessment methods can be used.

## **B. Strategies/Tests for Academic Skills Assessment**

### **1. Formal Tests**

Standardized norm-referenced or curriculum-referenced tests are sometimes used to measure reading/reading comprehension, math and academic achievement of NELB students who have been enrolled in ESL or mainstream classes prior to entry in the school district. However, the LCAP does not generally recommend this as a part of the *initial assessment* process unless students score as "fluent English proficient" on the ESL proficiency assessment. In such cases it may provide additional information about the student's content skills and knowledge and also whether she will be able to do grade-level work.

An alternative to using a standardized norm-referenced test of academic abilities is a test developed by Robert C. Parker for new enrollees who have received ESL services or been enrolled in English-only classrooms prior to entry into the school system. While the "*Language Proficiency Classification and Instructional Placement Instrument*" is not a test of knowledge in any specific content area, it can be used to diagnose the student's control of some academic language skills--e.g., comprehension, dictation, composition and *functional reading skills*<sup>12</sup>--needed in mainstream classes.

Tests are also available in some *non-English languages*, mainly Spanish, to assess academic achievement of ESL or bilingual students. See Appendix G, p. 115 for a list of academic ability tests in non-English languages. Again, formal academic achievement tests are often impractical for *purposes of initial instructional placement* due to difficulty in finding trained bilingual evaluators and materials in many languages. Many concerns have also been raised about the reliability and validity of such tests.

### **2. Informal Assessment**

In addition to interviewing students and parents about educational experiences and curricula/systems, ESL teachers and content teachers might collaborate to develop their own informal assessments to diagnose content skills and knowledge of NELB students. Deborah Short's article, *Assessing Integrated Language and Content Instruction* in TESOL Quarterly (Winter 1993, 627-656) provides excellent background information on the topic of informal assessments. She presents an "assessment matrix" for language and content educators to use as a guide in selecting what and how to assess language and content skills.

Districts interested in finding out more about such informal assessment options can consult Chapter Nine, p. 173 and also the list of references and/or contact resource organizations for assessment, Appendix G, p. 114.

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<sup>12</sup>The author specifically states that there are no reading comprehension activities in this test version.



### **C. Academic Content & Skills Assessment Personnel**

Qualifications of those testing academic skills will depend on the approach and the language of assessment. Direct assessment of academic achievement in the native language should be conducted by a qualified bilingual evaluator. For more informal assessment of academic achievement, trained interpreters/translators may work in conjunction with qualified assessment specialists, ESL teachers, and content teachers.

## Appendix G

### ASSESSMENT PLAN OUTLINE

Use the checklist below to construct a plan for implementing a comprehensive assessment system.

<i>SCREENING</i>	Name/Title of Assessor(s): _____ _____ — User(s) of the Data: _____ _____
<b>Purpose:</b> What we want to know	<b>Method(s):</b> How we're going to find out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•NELB background</li>   <li>•Educational history</li> <li>•Native language and literacy skills</li> <li>•Relevant family &amp; cultural information</li> <li>•Personal expectations &amp; educational goals</li>   <li>•Health or special needs</li> </ul>	___ •Primary/Home Language Survey completed at time of registration  ___ •Review of school records & available test scores ___ •Formal interview with parent/guardian(s), student and interpreter, if needed  ___ •Health/special needs screening

<b>LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY CLASSIFICATION</b>	Name/Title of Assessor(s): <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> User(s) of the Data: <hr/>
<b>Purpose:</b> What we want to know	<b>Method(s):</b> How we're going to find out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•English language proficiency-listening, speaking, reading and writing</li> <li>•Native language proficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>___ •Formal ESL proficiency tests</li> <li>___ •Informal assessments (e.g. oral interviews, story retelling, writing samples, teacher/specialist observations)</li> <li>___ •Formal assessment of native language skills if tests and trained bilingual evaluator available</li> <li>___ •Informal assessments of native language skills</li> </ul>

<b>PLACEMENT</b>	Name/Title of Assessor(s): <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> User(s) of the Data: <hr/>
<b>Purpose:</b> What we want to know	<b>Method(s):</b> How we're going to find out
•Prior content knowledge & skills	<div> <div>◆ <b><u>Newly Enrolled Students</u></b></div> <div> <div>___ •Formal student or parent interview (with</div> <div>needed)</div> <div>___ •Review of previous schooling records &amp; test</div> <div>___ •Review of previous schooling records &amp; test</div> <div>___ •Student work samples</div> <div>___ •Teacher made tests</div> <div>___ •Academic achievement tests</div> </div> <div> <div>interpreter, if</div> <div>scores</div> <div>scores</div> </div> </div>

<b>MONITORING PROGRESS</b>	Name/Title of Assessor(s): <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> User(s) of the Data: <hr/>
<b>Purpose:</b> What we want to know	<b>Method(s):</b> How we're going to find out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Progress in acquiring academic language &amp; content skills while in ESL program</li>   <li>•Ability to participate partially or fully in regular instructional program</li>   <li>•Successfulness of partial or full placement in regular instructional program (post (ESL) service monitoring)</li>   <li>•Overall effectiveness of ESL program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>___ •Formal ESL proficiency test</li> <li>___ •Curriculum-referenced ESL test</li> <li>___ •Performance-based assessments of language &amp; content skills (e.g., checklists, rating scales, matrices)</li> <li>___ •Samples of student work (e.g., journals, stories, tests) collected in portfolio</li> <li>___ •Self evaluations</li>   <li>___ •Formal test of academic language skills</li> <li>___ •Standardized, norm-referenced achievement test</li> <li>___ •Samples of student work (e.g., journals, stories, tests) collected in portfolio</li> <li>___ •ESL teacher observation (formal checklist)</li> <li>___ •Classroom teacher observations (formal checklist)</li> <li>___ •Course work grades</li> <li>___ •Student &amp; parent interviews</li>   <li>___ •Teacher observations</li> <li>___ •Review of student work, course grades, quizzes &amp; tests, portfolio</li> <li>___ •Student &amp; parent interview</li>   <li>___ •Program evaluation (e.g., TESOL self-study, program implementation checklists)</li> <li>___ •Review of student performance data</li> </ul>
Resource Info: EAC Comprehensive Assessment Framework & Robert Parker's "A Program Process Guide"	

**Appendix G**  
**INITIAL ASSESSMENT RECORD FORM**

Student: _____ Date of Enrollment: _____  Primary/Home Language: _____ Nationality: _____		
<b><i>I. English Language Proficiency Assessment</i></b>		
<b>A. Date(s)</b>	<b>Proficiency Instrument(s) or Informal Assessments given</b>	<b>Score/ Classification</b>
	Listening:	
	Speaking:	
	Reading:	
	Reading Comprehension:	
	Writing:	
<b>B. Evaluator(s):</b>		
<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div>		

**C. Results:** Overall classification of English Proficiency (check the appropriate box)

- +-+  
+-+ NEP (Non-English Proficiency)  
+-+  
+-+ LEP (Limited English Proficiency)  
    ++  
    ++ Beginner  
    ++  
    ++ Intermediate  
    ++  
    ++ Advanced  
+-+  
+-+ TEP (Transitional English Proficiency)  
+-+  
+-+ FEP (Fluent English Proficiency)

Briefly describe the student's overall English language proficiency and language skills in specific areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing as indicated by formal or informal assessment.

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**D. Recommended ESL Instructional Placement Level:**

- +  
----+ Entry-Level  
----+  
----+ Beginner  
----+  
----+ Intermediate  
----+  
----+ Advanced  
----+  
----+ Transitional

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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<b>II. Assessment of Primary/Home Language Proficiency</b>		
<b>A. Date(s)</b>	<b>Proficiency Instrument(s) or Informal Assessments given</b>	<b>Score/ Classification</b>
	Listening:	
	Speaking:	
	Reading:	
	Reading Comprehension:	
	Writing:	
<b>B. Evaluator(s):</b>		
<hr/> <hr/>		
<b>C. Results: Summary of Student's Primary/Home Language Skills</b>		
<p>If formal assessment instrument was used to evaluate the student's skills in the primary/home language, how would you summarize the results of the testing? i.e., would you say that the student's overall oral and written skills are at or near grade level?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>		
<p>If informal assessments were given to evaluate the student's proficiency in the primary/home language, describe any observations.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>		



<b>III. Assessment of Academic Skills</b>	
<b>A. Date</b>	<b>Instruments or Procedures used to assess academic skills or prior knowledge</b>
<b>B. Evaluator(s):</b>	
<hr/> <hr/>	
<b>C. Results:</b>	
<p>Describe anything you have learned about the student's prior knowledge and academic skills (e.g., in math, reading comprehension, or specific subject areas) through either formal or informal assessment, as appropriate.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
<p>Recommended Content Instructional Placement:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

**Appendix G**  
**RESOURCES FOR ASSESSMENT**

**ORGANIZATIONS**

<b>EAC-East</b>	<b>Evaluation Assistance Center East</b> George Washington University 1730 North Lynn Street, #401 Arlington, VA 22209	TEL: 1-800-925-EACE
<b>MRC</b>	<b>New England Multifunctional Resource</b> <i>Center for Language and Culture</i> 144 Wayland Avenue Providence, RI 02906-4384	TEL: (401) 274-9548
<b>LCAP</b>	<b>Language &amp; Cultural Affairs Program</b> Office of Rural Education 500 Dorset St. South Burlington, VT 05403	TEL: (802) 658-6342
<b>NCBE</b>	<b>National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education</b> 118 22nd Street NW Washington, DC 20037	TEL: 1-800-321-NCBE

**SPECIAL EDUCATION RESOURCE**

<b>University of Texas at Austin</b> <b>Bilingual Special Education Program</b> Department of Special Education College of Education Education Building 306 Austin, TX 78712-1290	TEL: (512) 471-6244
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**ASSESSMENTS AVAILABLE ON LOAN FROM**  
**LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS PROGRAM RESOURCE LIBRARY**

***Formal English as a Second Language Proficiency (ESL) Tests -***

*IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT & Pre-IPT)*--tests listening, speaking, reading and writing skills--available for students at pre-school through high school levels.

*Language Assessment Battery(LAB)*--tests listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (grades K-12).

*Language Assessment Scales (LAS & Pre-LAS)*--tests listening, speaking, reading and writing skills--available for students at pre-school through high school levels.

*Secondary Level English Proficiency Test (SLEP)*--measures listening and reading comprehension for students in grades seven through twelve.

***Non-Commercial English as a Second Language Proficiency Tests -***

*Language Proficiency Classification & Instructional Placement Instrument*--tests aural-oral proficiency for social and integrative purposes; academic-cognitive language for learning with English and learning English as Content; comprehension dictation and vocabulary comprehension; composition-writing skills and functional reading.

### ***Informal ESL Assessments***

*Fairfax County Public Schools ESL Assessment Guide*--includes informal assessments for oral language, writing, reading, and mathematics.

***The LCAP also has a collection of checklists, rating scales, matrices, and questionnaires for informal assessment of language skills.***

#### ***Primary/Home Language Assessment Instruments -***

*Basic Elementary Skills Test (BEST)*--available in Khmer and Vietnamese languages. Basic test of math computation skills, spelling, reading and writing in the primary/home language.

*Bilingual Two Language Battery of Tests (English-Vietnamese)* --criterion-referenced language dominance test of oral proficiency, written comprehension, initial letters and spelling, reading, listening, and writing. Administered in Vietnamese and English.

*Boston Cloze Tests*--available in Chinese, Vietnamese, Italian, Greek, Khmer, Laotian, French, Haitian, Spanish languages for grades 1 through 12. Tests reading comprehension skills in primary/home language.

*Language Assessment Battery (Spanish Version--LAB)*--tests Spanish listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in Spanish.

*Language Assessment Scales (Spanish version of LAS & Pre-LAS)*--tests Spanish listening, speaking, reading and writing proficiency at elementary through secondary levels. Pre-LAS test for ages 3-5.

*Spanish version of IDEA Oral Proficiency Test (IPT)*--tests Spanish listening and speaking proficiency of students at elementary through secondary levels. Pre-IPT test for ages 3-5.

#### ***Tests of Basic Academic Skills***

*Basic Elementary Skills Test (BEST)*--available in Khmer and Vietnamese languages. Basic test of math computation skills, spelling, reading and writing in the primary/home language.

*Boston Cloze Tests*--available in Chinese, Vietnamese, Italian, Greek, Khmer, Laotian, French, Haitian, Spanish languages for grades 1 through 12. Tests reading comprehension skills in primary/home language.

### **REFERENCE MATERIALS**

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